

VZCZCXRO1121
PP RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #0676/01 1201253
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 301253Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7037
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI 0158

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000676

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE, SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS AND AF/SPG
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AU](#) [UN](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: DARFUR - MOVING FORWARD FROM TRIPOLI

Ref: KHARTOUM 0644

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Summary

¶1. (SBU) Following the conclusion of the April 28-29 Tripoli talks on Darfur, Poloff met with Khartoum-based representatives of the UN, AU, EU, Norway, and the Netherlands, as well as the Arab League Secretary General's point person on Africa, to discuss ways to

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sustain momentum on the Darfur political process. The representatives viewed the endorsement of the UN/AU lead on the process and regional governments', including Libya, Eritrea and Chad, acknowledgement of this lead as an important step. However, the representatives agreed that concrete actions must be taken in the near future to demonstrate progress in bringing Darfur rebel factions to negotiations with the Sudanese Government.

¶2. (SBU) Three tracks emerged from the discussions: 1) The need to ensure that leaders at the capital level, as well as the UN leadership in New York and the AU leadership in Addis Ababa, share a common understanding of the next steps for moving forward from the Tripoli meeting; 2) The necessity of establishing a mechanism, such as a Contact Group, to review progress on the political process, ensure accountability for the UN/AU, monitor coordination of the UN/AU initiative with the efforts of regional governments and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM); and 3) The importance of the UN and AU developing a roadmap, as stipulated in the Tripoli Consensus, in the near future, which would form the basis of discussions between member states and the UN/AU on the type of capacity-building support the bodies would need to advance their strategy and on the division of labor among members states (and the SPLM) in bringing the Sudanese Government and the Darfur rebel factions to negotiations. End summary.

Understanding Tripoli

¶3. (SBU) The Khartoum-based representatives emphasized the importance of key governments, such as the USG, drawing on the momentum from the Tripoli talks to confirm a common understanding of the outcome of the meeting with capitals, the UN in New York, and the AU in Addis Ababa. Points would include the UN/AU lead on the political process; the urgency with which the UN and AU need to present a comprehensive strategy and a realistic timeline to lay the groundwork for peace negotiations; a mechanism to monitor

international efforts on the political process; and, in the case of the SPLM, a request for definition from its leadership on the role it seeks to play in the UN/AU-led process.

Follow-up Mechanism

¶4. (SBU) A mechanism to review the progress on the political process, promote transparency, and ensure coordination among international actors is essential, according to the Khartoum-based representatives. A Contact Group could exist at the Khartoum-level--with weekly meetings--and be mirrored at a higher-level, perhaps monthly. The Contact Group would provide a forum for the UN/AU to describe its actions vis-à-vis the non-signatories and the Sudanese Government; to review the coordination of international initiatives, including that of the SPLM; and to request support from the international community for the UN/AU-led effort. This mechanism would encourage accountability among all the actors, including the development of realistic goals and timelines for the UN/AU and SPLM initiatives.

UN/AU Roadmap

¶5. (SBU) The final statement of the Tripoli meeting stipulates that the UN and AU will develop a roadmap and strategy for laying a foundation for negotiations between the non-signatories and the Sudanese Government. UN Envoy Jan Eliasson and AU Envoy Salim Ahmed Salim asked their staff in Khartoum to prepare a draft of this roadmap by May 4, according to the UN Director of Political Affairs in Khartoum. The Khartoum-based Darfur watchers said that the international community should urge Eliasson and Salim to finalize their strategy by May 15.

¶6. (SBU) This strategy will form the basis of subsequent discussions with the UN/AU on concrete methods for the international community to provide support for the UN/AU and SPLM initiatives, through the

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existing Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST) comprised of UN/AU staff in Sudan. Working-level UN and AU representatives emphasized that it would be premature to provide any assistance prior to the presentation of the roadmap because the UN and AU would have neither the capacity to absorb nor a strategy to utilize such support. (Note: USG support would likely include the provision of experts on power-sharing, wealth-sharing, rebel factions, and the legal aspects of the Darfur Peace Agreement. The UN and AU have underscored that such experts would need to be full-time and willing to commit to working in Sudan for a minimum of six months in order to be effective. End note.)

¶7. (SBU) The UN and AU will have to develop the roadmap in consultation with regional actors, including the SPLM. Support from the international community would also need to involve facilitation of an SPLM role, after the SPLM leadership has clarified its view on next steps. An AU representative reported to the group that the SPLM timeline for the peace process was significantly longer than that envisioned by the UN and AU and expressed his doubts about the SPLM's real commitment to its ambitious plan--which includes a request for 1.6 million dollars--to work with the non-signatories.

¶8. (SBU) If the UN/AU present a the roadmap on May 15, the international community could study the strategy, identify methods of support, and endorse the plan at a Contact Group meeting at the end of May.

Comment

¶9. (SBU) Numerous Darfur watchers question the commitment of Eliasson and Salim to lead the effort to bring rebel movements into negotiations with the Sudanese Government.

Eliasson and Salim can, however, move quickly to design a structure and framework for the UN/AU initiative that their successor can carry forward and key governments can monitor and support. End comment.

¶10. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.